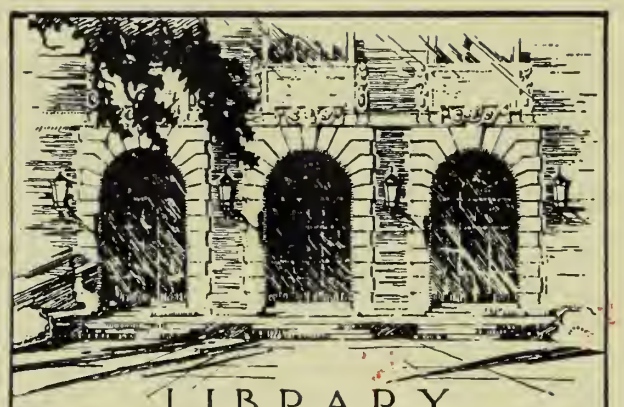

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BULLETIN OF THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

Vol. 38 February 11, 1948 No. 13

THE TWO HORIZONS

A Report on the Race with Catastrophe

EDWIN R. CLAPP

Professor of English

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UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

Twelfth Annual Frederick William Reynolds Lecture

Delivered at the University of Utah

February 11, 1948

THE EXTENSION DIVISION

UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

SALT LAKE CITY

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The Reynolds Lectureship

The Annual Reynolds Lectureship at the University of Utah serves a double purpose.

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The committee on selection consists of the President of the University, the Director of the Extension Division and the members of the board of directors of the Reynolds Association.

It is gratifying to the originators of this project and to those who have made contributions for its support that the Reynolds Lectureship has now become firmly established as a University function — promoted and administered by the University.

H. L. Marshall
President, Frederick William Reynolds Association

Lectureship Policies and a Point of View

From introductory remarks by the President of the Frederick William Reynolds Association at the first annual lecture, January, 1936:

"In these lectures, as the years go by, new knowledge, important subjects, and vital issues will be discussed. It is more than likely that some of these issues may be controversial in nature, about which differences of opinion and strong feeling may exist. But even upon such questions it is proposed that the speaker shall be free to approach his subject with intellectual courage and vigor and advance any ideas which he can support with facts and logic.

"It is assumed, of course, that good taste shall not be violated, that propaganda in the narrower sense shall never intrude, and that due regard to the rights and feelings of others shall always be evident. But as long as the treatment of a subject is intelligent, objective, and critical, it is assumed that the speaker shall be free to follow facts and reasoning through to their conclusion.

"If such a policy, perchance, shall change some of our beliefs—then so be it. For beliefs are the framework upon which we do our thinking. Many present beliefs are the product of other times and other conditions — useful then, perhaps, but possibly hampering now. When certain beliefs hinder the effective use of intelligence, or hamper our adjustment to new conditions in a rapidly changing world, then more helpful beliefs become priceless — and desirable even at the expense of some temporary loss of tranquility.

"The products of intellectual activity and scientific investigation are to be brought here, not the reiteration of uncritical traditional views. On no other basic premise can a Frederick William Reynolds Lecture be true to its name — or be even worthy of its name."

The Two Horizons

A Report on the Race with Catastrophe

What character our time will wear in history, like what song the Sirens sang, is a puzzling question but not beyond all conjecture. Some oracle will prophesy a present end to historians, and thus to history. Let us not quibble. Ages hence, we may suppose, a curious antiquarian from Thibet, or wandering archaeologist stopping over on a trip through interplanetary space, will ferret out the Time Capsule from the ruins of New York, decipher the inscription on Stalin's broken tomb, brood over certain twentieth century documents found in the debris of the British Museum, and give to what we perhaps ironically call "modern civilization" a just name. Thinking of the vast creations of our science, unprecedented, and uncontrolled — these enormous means confounding our puny ends — one might commend to that far spirit "The Age of Frankenstein." Thinking of the two great wars fought for a free society and of the fruits of triumph, one might urge "The Period of Paradox" to describe the era in which one world has come to seem impossible, and two fatal. Perhaps this is only seeming. Certainly, the play we act in cannot be titled without the scene on which the curtain is now rising. When it falls, the span between the horizons visible at the beginning and at the end of the past half-century may be truly measured, and one at least known for reality or mirage.

"Every man," said Alfred de Vigny, "has seen the wall that bounds his being" — *Tout homme a vu le mur qui borna son esprit.* Every age has seen a horizon for the human spirit. In 1895, at the close of Darwin's century, Arthur James Balfour could write:

> We sound the future, and learn that after a period, long compared with the individual life, but short indeed compared with the divisions of time open to our investigation, the energies of our system will decay, the glory of the sun will be dimmed, and the earth, tideless and inert, will no longer tolerate the race which has for a moment disturbed its solitude. Man will go down into the pit, and all his thoughts will perish . . . Nor will anything that *is* be better or be worse for all that the labour, genius, devotion, and suffering of men have striven through countless generations to effect.[1]

Written out of the knowledge and in the spirit of the *fin de siècle,* Balfour's words are an epitaph on man as an immortal race little lower than the angels; they are at the same time a judgment that man's future, finite indeed, is bounded only by the continued habitability of his physical universe. This prospect was widely credited at the outset of our era; it is still our far horizon.

In 1928 J. B. S. Haldane ventured a rough terminal date for human activities, observing that, although the sun will probably have cooled only a little a million million years from now, "somewhere about that time it is quite likely that the earth's surface will be destroyed owing to the disruption of the moon by tidal forces." [2] He went on to

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[1] *Foundations of Belief* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1897), pp. 30-31.

[2] "Man's Destiny," *Possible Worlds and Other Papers* (New York and London: Harper, 1928), p. 300 ff.

add, however, that man's world and civilization are not identical, that the latter is a fragile creation and may well not survive a modern war, and that we have a choice between taking our own evolution in hand through the improvement of human nature and ceasing to exist. These opinions, you will recall, were expressed near the mid-point of the half-century, the first World War being past, the second still to come. At that date, Haldane thought the tapping of atomic energy "wildly unlikely," to use his own words, and the odds therefore slightly against such a catastrophic end of civilization. Everyone knows the true event. The United States employed an atomic bomb against the Japanese at Hiroshima, August 6, 1945. In 1947 Albert Einstein, Harold Urey, and other eminent scientists in a public statement entitled "The Last Hour before Midnight" held that the process of nuclear fission will shortly become common property, that men will then possess the means of self-destruction, and that the alternative to peace has become "the death of our society." This is the near horizon.

One way to summarize the history of the first half of the twentieth century is thus to note that at its beginning human destiny could be described as unlimited save by the fate of the earth itself, and at its close (so far as civilization is identified with humanity) as limited by men's capacity to save themselves from themselves — and this within a period not of millions of years but of perhaps at most a decade. This sudden, this gigantic, constriction of our horizon seems to me terribly real and terribly urgent. As to the meaning of a conflict in which atomic weapons would quite possibly be teamed with the less spectacular but perhaps even more lethal devices of the bacteriologist, I am willing to accept the testimony of the expert. It is not reassuring. As to its possibility, I am willing to trust my own observations. They are not reassuring either.

It can, of course, be said that, even at worst, the far horizon is still open, that a third war would involve mainly the western world and could produce an event only of the order of the collapse of classical civilization and the so-called Dark Ages, and that times in hope might see another Athens risen, a Bethlehem at peace, the American dream fulfilled. To many, such assurance will seem cold comfort. With all its faults we are used to western civilization; we should probably miss it if it were gone. And though the death of our cosmos at some astronomical date is a sobering thought, somehow it does not touch us like the imminent prospect of our own. With Charles Lamb, we have an "intolerable disinclination to dying," and are "in love with this green earth." Then too we have a regard for our flesh-and-blood children warmer than for those hypothetical descendants who, admirable though they may be, are, after all, perfect strangers.

No, the near horizon is real. We must face it, change it, push it back. If I did not think this possible, I would have chosen another topic tonight. The role of Jeremiah lacks fascination. I believe Einstein when he says, "To our generation has come the possibility of making the most fateful decision in the recorded history of the human race," and to believe this is to hold that we have a choice leading to fruitful action — in other words, to accept responsibility. The responsibility that we accept should be seen, however, not in terms of one horizon only, but

of *both*. If we cannot take the near view, we shall not survive. If we cannot take the far view, it does not much matter whether we survive or not. Graham Wallas once said that we must "either justify our civilization or change it." We may have to change it to justify it, and unless we justify it we shall probably find it changed for us. To me it seems that any public program which men are asked to take seriously must look to the near horizon — that is, meet the test: "Does this hold hope for the human community in its present difficulties?" — or to the far horizon — that is, meet the test: "Does this promise well for the human community in the generations to come?" — or, better still, to the two horizons. In the light of these tests, I propose to offer and examine a program.

II

Should some Ancient Pistol demand, "Quick, in one word, your formula! Under which king, Bezonian? Speak or die!" I should answer, "education." Having recalled the mountains of the world in labor, I know this must seem a squeak from a particularly ridiculous mouse. Let me explain and qualify.

Since Plato's time at least, men have been seeking salvation through education. Democratic societies from their origins have held it indispensable to the success of popular government. The seventeenth-century Comenius considered it a means to international peace. In 1920 H. G. Wells, concluding his *Outline of History,* penned a now-famous sentence, "Human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe." This conclusion follows a passage in which its author, looking out over a London tired and shabby at the end of World War I, wrote:

> Beyond London the country sinks into night, and across the narrow sea are North France and Belgium devastated, Germany with scores of thousands of her infants dwindling and dying for want of milk, all Austria starving. Half the population of Vienna, it is believed unless American relief comes quickly, is doomed to die of hardship before the spring. Beyond that bleak twilight stretches the darkness of Russia.[3]

The passage, like some others in the *Outline,* reads curiously in 1948. Was Wells, who wrote his book as a contribution to the race against catastrophe, wrong? Have centuries of teaching brought us peace? Can we indeed still mention peace and education at one breath, unless in irony or ignorance?

I think we can and must. The failures of education have been legion. For a devastating, if one-sided, bill of particulars on the modern scene consult the books of Porter Sargent.[4] But has education had no consequences, and left no mark on history? The legacy of Greece, the world of the medieval church, the story of the Bible and the Reformation, the schools of Victorian England and the British character, the nerve and strength of Hitler's Germany and the fact that Soviet Russia seems so formidable to us today are testimony to the effectiveness of various kinds of teaching. Their worth depends upon our scheme of

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[3] Third edition (New York: Macmillan, 1921), pp. 1082, 1100 quoted.

[4] Especially *War and Education* (Boston: Sargent, 1943); *Between Two Wars* (Boston: Sargent, 1945).

values, and this raises the real issue, which is not education versus no education, or education versus something else, but the relation of *all* available means, *including* education, to our total ends — in my terms, the two horizons. What do we want? What kind of education do we need? How far can it help us?

Let us take the last question first. Obviously, work and play, family and community, the whole world beyond the schoolhouse doors, are the larger part of experience and therefore, broadly, of education; the crash of '29, the depression, and the two world wars were among the great extracurricular lessons of our time, however much or little we have profited by them. But respect for such teaching may lead us to undervalue formal education. For some, its value is zero. It is, they say, "casting false pearls before real swine." Others deny to the little red schoolhouse any function beyond stuffing the young with the "three R's" and perhaps a few graces ("frills" if they are thinking as taxpayers). For them, the little red schoolhouse stands firm in the body politic, and any talk of its influencing society is nonsense. The boat drifts; the school is on the boat. At the other extreme are those who speak as if the schoolhouse were a kind of extramundane donkey engine and snubbing post on a celestial bank, from which society at the end of its educational towline can be checked and guided.

I think that the truth is between and that it applies both to the little red schoolhouse and the big white college on the hill. Society is not one boat; it is a whole flotilla, of which some vessels drift — or are propelled — faster than others. The school is a tug, which can and should supply force and direction. But the convoy is vast, and battered by wind and wave; some of the ships seem manned by lunatics, and on others the crews are asleep, or fishing. Sometimes there are submarines. Still, the convoy has a destination, and the place of the school is ahead, pulling. Education, that is, works within the limits and values of a given society, which is a function of human nature, which is various. The school can and should embody our "best self," the conscience and the intelligence of mankind. Alone, education — no matter what its trademark — will not save us, but we will not be saved without it.

If so much is granted, there is still the question of time. "Soap and education," Mark Twain observes, "are not as sudden as a massacre but they are more deadly in the long run." The near horizon draws nearer; is there a long enough run? Nobody knows. The only answer is to try and see. As Wells said, "The time may be much longer than our hopes and much shorter than our fears." Whatever there is we have if we want more we shall have to make it. People like to think that fortune is on their side; but fortune is not an entirely irrational creature and, as Pasteur says, favors the well prepared.[5]

In its simplest terms, our need is enough of the right kind of men and women. In 1808, Du Pont de Nemours wrote to Jefferson, "When one wishes to have citizens, one must make them." I see two ways to do this; one is by what Haldane calls "that experimental inquiry into the human mind which offers the only serious hope of improving it

[5] "*Le hasard ne favorise que les esprits préparés.*" This and the quotation from Du Pont de Nemours are taken from Alfred E. Cohn, *Minerva's Progress* (New York: Harcourt Brace, c. 194 pp. 51, 64.

Such modification of our nature looks to the far horizon. The other way is to do what can be done with human nature as it is in men and women now alive. How else can we meet the near horizon?

I have asked, "What do we want?" and have answered, "Enough of the right kind of men and women." It will be said that our problem is much more concrete and complex than that. We want sanity, security, and peace; recovery in Europe; tolerance for all races, creeds, colors; full freedom for men everywhere. We want to know how to achieve these ends: how best to aid European economy, what course to follow in China and the Near East, where our Greek adventure is leading, by what means to strengthen the United Nations, most of all how to deal with Russia. We want to go on with our unfinished business at home, to abolish second-class citizenship, to operate our economy in the "general interest," to demonstrate by example — as has now been said again and again — that democracy can really be made to work.

All these wants involve decisions, and decisions are made by people. In terms of the near horizon, the decisions of the people of Russia and the United States are critical. If someone wishes to say that in Russia the people do not make the decisions, I reply, first, that this can be true of any people only within limits and not forever; second that Russian decisions, however and by whomever made, are influenced by our own; and, third, that these facts increase rather than diminish American responsibility and opportunity. If the world ever needed a maximum concentration in any one people of all the responsibility, judgment, sensitivity, and imagination of which human nature is capable, it needs it in the people of America. Today and tomorrow, the men whom we elect, their decisions, the support and the pressures that they are made by us to feel, our will to peace, our tolerance or intolerance, selfishness or unselfishness, are more than our own business. What we are and do is naturally of enormous concern to us here and now; it may be decisive in those countries that geographically and politically lie between us and Russia; it may alter the character of the Great Bear herself, and — beyond the first horizon — the verdict on our society. And what we are and do is in no small part a product of education.

On June 19, 1947, the Board of Regents of this University adopted a resolution which described "the building of a just and enduring peace" as "now the greatest and most urgent task of mankind," and went on to say that "the successful performance of this . . . task depends upon a world-wide knowledge of the causes of war, of the nature and structure of peace, and of the means by which peace has been attained . . . " That such knowledge is indispensable no one, I think, would deny. But it is not enough, and it may be less fundamental than something else. The failure of our time has been at least as much one of will and character as of knowledge. What did we not know that would have prevented World War II? We are all fond of the phrase "men of good will" and like to suppose that it describes us. I fear that the true men of good will are in fact a small and select company, that most of us are very moderately good and rather undistinguished for will — especially when preceded by the adjective. Peace hinges less on what we know than what we are; character *is* destiny.

And when we talk about peace depending on knowledge, we imply that men are creatures of reason who, once informed, will order all things well. Men are creatures of reason, also of impulse, prejudice, and emotion — all delivered in the same package. Is war more a rational or an irrational activity? Does the mind need to be fed and disciplined more than the feelings? Is a man a series of insulated faculties with separate push buttons or is he a whole?

Society, says Flexner, can afford either war or education, but not both. I have argued that it is better to afford education, that education is adequate only as it disciplines intellect *and* emotion, develops knowledge *and* character, that character measured against our visible horizons is a matter of effective good will, of responsibility, judgment, sensitivity, and imagination. I shall now argue that to meet these conditions collegiate and adult education in the United States should stress general education, within the frame of general education the humanities, and within the frame of the humanities literature.

III

The business of philosophy, Coleridge wrote, "consists in just distinction; while it is the privilege of the philosopher to preserve himself constantly aware that distinction is not division." The discussion following is philosophical at least in that its distinctions are not divisive; they are for emphasis or convenience, and aspects of education briefly treated or omitted altogether are not necessarily marked with the brand of Cain. Even a professor of English cannot say everything at once! Early schooling is important; so is higher education abroad. I confine myself to the American college partly because it seems the core of the problem, partly because I know something about it.

Like most established institutions, the college tends to be conservative. It has its familiar, comfortable patterns; we cling to them even if their products show signs of spavin or housemaid's knee and can be called educated only through courtesy. This fact, among others, has led to some unkindness, even from friends: Ernest Hopkins of Dartmouth has described the college as a combination orphanage and penal institution, and Woodrow Wilson its studies as an interference with life organized by the faculty.[6] More serious are Porter Sargent's charge that the dead hand of the past prevents adjustment to the needs of the present, and Chancellor Hutchins' statement:

> Taking the country over there is little evidence that its college and university graduates as such have ever done, said, or even thought anything which suggested that they could be singled out to lead the way in improving the education, government, or character of our people.[7]

But the college also has its ferments and uprisings. Sometimes these are effervescent fads disturbing only the surface; sometimes, however, they trouble the depths. The events of recent years have led to much soul searching among educators; one result is the movement toward "general education." Dr. Cowley of Stanford, speaking on this campus some eighteen months ago, amended Wells's statement to read:

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[6] Quoted in Burges Johnson, *Campus versus Classroom* (New York: Ives Washburn, 1946), p. 52.

[7] Quoted in Sargent, *War and Education*, p. 162.

"Modern history becomes more and more a race between *general* education and catastrophe." I believe this to be true. Why? To answer this question, one must define general education.

The name is not a happy one, but it is hard to suggest a better. "Basic" and "common" are only partial equivalents for "general"; and the "liberal" education of nineteenth century tradition, while an ancestor, has an air of aristocracy and remoteness from practice that its descendant does not. However awkward the name, the nature of general education seems clear. It is, first of all, for everybody. It is the knowledge and discipline most essential to men and women as human beings living together in a free society. As such, its emphasis is on what is common to us all, the needs and responsibilities which we share just as people, and not on those which differentiate us according to creed or color or section or income or business.

It is thus "general" as distinct from special, professional, or vocational educations. It does not replace these, of course; it complements them. Men and women must earn their livings; they need training to help them. But Americans are inclined — in practice if not in theory — to demand of the school that it prepare them to be economically successful, and not to worry much if it prepares them to be nothing else. For its part, the school, rather characteristically, has tried to deliver a two-toned, chrome-plated product all ready to run (preferably like a million dollars) right at the door of the vice president in charge of operations. I suspect that we have overdone it, from the point of view of business success itself, and that general education may have as a by-product an increase in the individual's vocational usefulness. The Danish People's Schools, regarded by some educators as models for adult general education, have curricula largely literary and historical, though most students are agricultural workers. One rather unexpected sequel to their growth has been better farming and the economic transformation of Denmark.[8]

At any rate, "general" means "for all." The teacher, the chemist, the salesman, the engineer are not exempt from the needs of human nature or the obligations of citizenship; why should any of them be exempt from education for these? We shall always want specialists, but specialists who are also something else. Unless we have them, we are not likely to get by that first horizon. On the score of mere self-interest, what shall it profit a man that he have the best technical training conceivable, if he can use it only while nervously watching the sky, or must forget or pervert it when the bombs come down?

"A man," says T. S. Eliot, "is both an individual and a member. . . . A man is not himself unless he is a member; and he cannot be a member unless he is also something alone." General education is concerned with both these roles. It is concerned with a man as a person, one who thinks, feels, knows fear and ambition, desires happiness and experiences sorrow, falls in love, has children and a home. It is concerned with a man in his relations, as a member of groups: the family, the neighborhood, the nation, and finally that community of the race

[8] See Sir Richard Livingstone, "The Future in Education," pp. 44-46, 54-55, in *On Education* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; New York: Macmillan, 1944). Throughout my paper, I am much indebted to this work.

to which we all owe our last allegiance. It is concerned, that is to say, with men as wholes rather than with such unreal and arbitrary entities as economic man or biochemical man or rational man; and similarly with men's societies and their histories as wholes rather than with academic segments and fractions. The ideal of general education is such a development of human beings and their relations as to permit and foster the realization of the best possibilities of every man. It thus looks not only to the first horizon but past this to the second.

Such aims have their consequences in the structure and emphases of college education. Among these consequences are a generous share (say about half) of the undergraduate program for general education, a considerable increase in the degree to which this program is prescribed, and a focus within the area of prescription on a few large courses integrating and illustrating basic knowledge and principles rather than a dispersion through a multitude of splinter courses developing specialties. Professional and departmental interests are served as before, except that the courses introductory to these interests can begin at a higher level, as founded more broadly and solidly than ever. But so far as general education is concerned, the emphasis is divisional rather than departmental, and the end in view is the happy man, the resourceful personality, the responsible citizen, rather than the proficient specialist.

Pedagogic details would be out of place; some misunderstanding, however, may be avoided if three further points are made. First, although some unity as to ultimate aims and major means seems necessary (and is not in fact difficult), a variety of curricula based on local and institutional conditions seems both certain and desirable. The west need not duplicate New England, nor a small college a state university.

Second, to call for "the knowledge and discipline most essential to men and women as human beings living together in a free society" is not to insist on an invariable array of particulars to be taught or some absolute academic machinery. There is no canonical "hundred greatest books" which everyone should know, but an indefinite number of significant good books from which various sound choices might be made. Minnesota gives a course centered on the three major revolutions of modern history: political, industrial, intellectual.[9] Columbia gives one organized around the questions: "How have people made a living? How have they lived together? How have they understood the world and their relations to it?" [10] More than one road leads to Rome.

Third, the basic general education course is not, or ought not to be, a "survey" in the sense that it attempts to cram together all the important data of history or biology or whatnot. Rather, it offers a limited and digestible series of concrete situations illustrating the nature and method of a broad area of knowledge and pertinent to our problems. Thus, President Conant of Harvard, himself a scientist, urges a course in the evolution of science as a part of cultural history, based on a few carefully studied cases stressing the progress of the past three

[9] Based on an unpublished paper by Professor Alburey Castell of the University of Minnesota.

[10] *A College Program in Action* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1946), p. 96. The whole description of the Columbia College general education program is of great interest.

hundred years, exemplifying "the tactics and strategy of science," and chosen from a variety of fields.[11] My three points come together: details of content and organization are matters for local common sense and are incidental to general education; what is essential is its purpose, its breadth, and its sense of relations.

IV

I have proposed the two horizons as a test for contemporary programs, including this one. That general education is a good, sound long-term investment probably seems a reasonable proposition. That in these days of world-heard thunder it is a practical short-term one may seem less evident. But what is the essential stuff of general education? Science, the social studies, and the humanities, interrelated, and designed for the average consumer. For the near horizon the import of science is clear enough. It is its success, coupled with our failures elsewhere, that has drawn that horizon down upon us, and we must comprehend our creature in self-defense if for no other reason. There are, of course, other reasons. Our environment and ourselves are the materials we have to work with; we must know their limitations, their resources, and how to use them. The knowledge of biological and physical science is a chief tool to these ends — such knowledge, that is, as is available to laymen and will, with other kinds, further wise decisions. Of these other kinds, social knowledge is the most obvious and the most pressing. Until we have an understanding and control of the complex of economic-political-social behavior at least comparable with our understanding and control of the physical world we shall not push the horizon back very far.[12] Presumably this kind of knowledge was intended in the Board of Regents' resolution I have cited, and surely the political scientist and his colleagues stand in the frontline trenches of the battle.

The instrumental knowledge of the social studies and the sciences is indispensable, but it is not enough. We need also another kind of knowledge or, if you prefer, experience. To many, this kind doubtless seems at first glance completely irrelevant to the urgencies of our time. But it is at the heart of the argument when we say that destiny hangs less on what we know than what we are, that an adequate education concerns character and emotion as well as learning and intellect, and that responsibility, judgment, sensitivity, and imagination are requisites to peace on earth. This knowledge is accessible in the humanities and is in the most realistic sense practical.

In using the term "humanities" I do not mean to renew an old dispute. Any discipline lacks meaning until related to human needs; any — mathematics, physics, what you will — can be so taught as to enlarge the spirit of man, and any — including English — so as to desiccate and shrivel it. But every discipline has its own nature; I mean by the humanities the natures of history, religion, philosophy, art, music, literature. Let us not quarrel over frontiers, over language or

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[11] "Education beyond the High School," *Association of American Colleges Bulletin*, XXXIII (March, 1947), pp. 18-19.

[12] See Robert S. Lynd, *Knowledge for What? The Place of Social Science in American Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Presss, 1939), *passim*.

psychology or anthropology for instance. To have them is more important than to place them. Even should the historian or the philosopher reject these well-meant advances and testily take refuge in the house of social science, it does not matter. He has something I want, and him will I follow though he slay me. Furthermore, each of these gentlemen must submit willy-nilly to my saying a few kind words about him, for I propose to take history, philosophy, and literature as my essential examples. First, however, one word more about the genus.

To borrow a phrase from Professor Castell of Minnesota, humanity is the subject matter of the humanities, and humanity means people. Let us add, tritely enough, *whole* people seen in the context of events. The stock in trade of the humanities is human experience and human values; their function is the chronicle, interpretation, and judgment of men's lives. I can do no better than to use the words of Sir Richard Livingstone: The humanities, he says, are

> the visions of human life which religion and poetry and thought have conceived, the "study of what man is and what he should pursue," and the record of his achievements in the world. These studies are indispensable to all men as men and to all citizens as citizens, and a life or an education without them is hopelessly maimed. . . . (Their) subject is Man — man viewed in himself and his proper nature, viewed as literature views him, as a being with feelings and prejudices, virtues and vices, ruled by intellect, or perverted by passion, inspired by ideals, torn by desires, . . . Aegisthus, Oedipus, Hamlet, Macbeth, Faust — or man, viewed as a being governed by the laws of a universe outside him, viewed as philosophy views him, subject to limitations of time and space, of his own origin, nature and destiny, . . . or, thirdly, man viewed as a political and social being, viewed as history views him, creating states and overthrowing them, making laws and refusing to be bound by them, . . . Pericles or Augustus, Cromwell or Robespierre. Before the student of literature, philosophy, and history are displayed *all* the forces and ideas that have governed man . . .[13]

Thus Sir Richard.

Let us amplify this account a little, keeping in mind the argument that these studies arm us to confront the near horizon. One reason for this is that they bring to us the horizons of the past, the experience, the standards, the wisdom of the total human adventure. Taken in its broadest sense, as general education ought to take it, history is the mother of us all. It is the universal matrix: every branch of knowledge has had its evolution, and history includes its annals. We cannot individually encompass all of history, nor is it necessary to do so. The great past holds source and seamark of the present and future: we can learn from it why we are where we are; we can also learn from it what may bring us where we may be. Whether one chooses to follow Toynbee or Spengler or some one else, it is idle to say that history teaches nothing; it teaches as much as men are willing to learn; it teaches cause and consequence, and it teaches character. No one can tell me that Burke and Bismarck, Valley Forge and Versailles, Lincoln at Gettysburg, Neville Chamberlain at Munich, and "the Spartans on the sea-wet rock" have no meaning. The task of general education is such a choice from the storehouse of history as has maximum relevance to our needs for a minimum expenditure of time.

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[13] "The Future in Education," pp. 34-35, 72-74.

As for philosophy, again in the broadest sense, it is, I suppose, what William James described as "an unusually persistent attempt to think clearly." It is what we do when we are compelled, like the hapless victims of Socrates, to go beyond our casual assumptions and try to answer the query, "Yes, but what do we mean *really?*" Like poetry and religion, philosophy may raise questions ultimately unanswerable; like them, it may be both a consolation and a criticism of life. In terms of the near horizon, it can do for our world what it can do for any: help us to see ourselves and our times in the perspective of thought, give unity and meaning to what we are and know, and above all, supply the great want of modern education with its ideal of dispassionate neutrality, a sense of values. Some things are better than other things; not all ideas are equal either now or under the aspect of eternity. It is the function of the humanities in general and of philosophy in particular to enable men to sit in judgment within their mortal city. I submit that this is useful.

V

If we were obliged to choose only three disciplines within the broad field of the humanities, we would be wise, I think, to settle for history, philosophy, and literature. The nature of words — sound become meaning and thus the bearer at once of thought and passion — explains why literature is for the school the exemplar of the arts. This is a matter of mass availability, not pre-eminence. None would deny to the speech of Brahms or Giotto powers in their own way matching poetry's; none, remembering the names of Goya, Grosz, and Daumier, or the impact of marching music and the unity of song, would deny these powers their pressure on the curve of politics. And through the great mass media — radio, the moving picture, and the press — art exerts a force statesman and teacher may alike regard with hope, envy, despair, and apprehension. It has become dangerous for a people to be literate, unless they are also educated.

All the arts are vehicles of feeling; because they are art, and hence form, they discipline what they express. Let us beware of saying that the arts express feeling only, for they do more. Let us beware also of belittling the range and depth of feeling, its potency for good and evil, and therefore the agents of emotional discipline, discrimination, and control. We may say with Santayana, "All worth leads us back to feeling somewhere," and likewise with Burges Johnson, "Emotional dissipation is more widely practiced than the alcoholic variety and is more harmful to the individual and society in the long run." [14]

To distinguish among emotive causes and effects, to choose the sound from the shoddy or sentimental, to know when one has a right to be moved, to extend the range of one's sympathies and perceptions, to be sensitive to whatever things are true and honest and lovely and of good report — is quite as important to men and nations as to distinguish among party platforms and foreign policies. Indeed, if one cannot do the first he can scarcely be trusted to do the second. Judgment is impossible without perception, character without a sense of values; and

[14] *Campus versus Classroom* (New York: Ives Washburn, 1946), p. 268. See the whole discussion, pp. 261-271.

these are the essence of aesthetic experience. When Ruskin says, "Taste . . . is the ONLY morality," this is Victorian excess of zeal, but it is not at bottom wrong. The arts have long been recognized as sources of personal pleasure and enrichment and thus proper to the education of the cultivated man; they are now claimed as social resources for general education. This is as it should be — with one caution: a work of art can have full meaning and effect only as it retains full character as art, not merely partial character as historical document or means of propaganda. In art so regarded, as often in the humanities and in all education at its best, the two horizons become one; what is good now is good for the long pull, and — we almost dare to say — *quod semper, quod ubique, et quod omnibus,* always, everywhere, for everybody.

I have called literature the exemplar of the arts. President Chalmers of Kenyon College describes it as "the subject most concerned with the account of man, ... that immense body of evidence about ourselves which observers of the clearest sight and most acute good judgment have set down," and adds, "in literary study alone lie the knowledge and the peculiar ability which permit one to assemble sense, reason, intuition, imagination, nuance, metaphor, and overtone in order to apprehend the whole event of men's inner lives." [15] Let us briefly note some of the grounds for such a verdict.[16]

Literature has its direct and immediately personal rewards, among them entertainment, the thrill of beauty, and the sense of experience and of meaning in experience. Its indirect and ultimately social values rise from the same sources as its more intimate rewards, and chiefly from two. The first of these social potentials is the range and depth of insight, the multiple truths about men and women and their transactions, the infinite variety and difference and yet the infinite unity and likeness of the world of Homer, Shakespeare, Whitman, Tolstoi, Mann, Malraux. This world is essentially human nature; to study it is to study life in its most meaningful aspect. It is a free world, for the house of art has many mansions; earthy fellows like Aristophanes and Chaucer rub shoulders there with Dante, and he with Voltaire. The denizens of the police-state must live on a one-way street, but literature finds room for Huck Finn and Uncle Toby, Gargantua and Don Quixote and the Cheshire Cat, and thus looks toward the Good Society.

If reach is the first great social potential of literature, impact is the second. The imaginative interpretation of fact may do what fact itself cannot. Is it the psychologist's study or Dostoevsky's Raskolnikoff that makes lucid the rationale of a crime? economic history or Swift that brings home the despair and bitterness of Ireland? a treatise on race or Faulkner's stories that tell us what a lynching really means? Knowledge must put on flesh and blood, it must be felt, to become a possession of our whole selves and thus a cause of action, which, as Aristotle says, is the end for which we live.

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[15] In "The Prerequisite of Christian Education," *American Scholar*, XVI (Autumn, 1947), 474-475.

[16] The remainder of this section is in part condensed from my article, "Literature and the Good Society," *Bulletin of the American Association of University Professors*, XXXII (Spring, 1946), 40-50.

Many men could repeat with full faith what Hazlitt wrote to his son. Reading, he said,

> is perhaps the greatest pleasure you will have in life, the one you will think of longest, and repent of least. If my life had been more full of calamity than it has (much more than I hope yours will be) I would live it over again, my poor little boy, to have read the books I did in my youth.

On these terms, literature is a good in itself; it is also — and I am not sure that there is really a difference between the two propositions — a means to other goods in its capacity to reveal and synthesize and act as catalyst to the mutations of truth. The argument may sound like special pleading; perhaps it is. But if I say these things because I teach literature, it is also true that I teach literature because I believe them.

VI

Academic people, it is said, have a weakness for making speeches full of pious platitude and noble resolution, and then going home warm with the glow of accomplishment — and nothing happens. I am not able to do much toward realizing the principles laid down here beyond trying to practice them in my classroom; I would, however, like to shape from these generalizations some steps toward a program operable in our own backyard, as well as at a safe distance.

Whatever the merits of my argument, plainly time is of its essence. To quote Dean Wilson at the inauguration of President Olpin, "We can't wait for the citizens of tomorrow. The world must be saved by the citizens of today. Adult education can be no longer a casual function, but rather must become a central responsibility." [17] As a first step we could offer an adult general education curriculum in the interests of peace on a local, state, and perhaps a regional, basis. The Utah colleges have established an annual conference with a continuing commission. Why not use this machinery to set up a joint unified program in modern history, economics, and politics, perhaps coupled now or later with one in the humanities? That it would require interdepartmental and interinstitutional co-operation is one of its better features. Such a program might be extended through regional groups, but our first concern should be its working at home, and the one genuine problem is students. "It is as important, for practical purposes," Livingstone writes, "that education should be attractive as that it should be good . . . . Most human beings have a capacity for education, rather than a desire for it." Apart from the blandishments of publicity, I wonder if education itself — a subject that "comes home to men's business and bosoms," taught in accessible and pleasant surroundings, without the side shows of fees, grades, and credits — might not do the trick. Or is this both idealistic and naive? There would be questions of staff and finance, of course, but create an audience, and everything else becomes possible.

In this first proposal, I have been thinking of the near horizon, but for either, education's best answers must come from the adult field — and are still to seek. The veterans have taught us what we should al-

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[17] *Inauguration of Albert Ray Olpin* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah, 1948), p. 22. The address as a whole supports the view taken here.

ways have known: how much maturity means, most of all just in those humane studies I have stressed, where experience is telling. It is not sure that the colleges have done well by the veterans while they have had them, but it is sure that the cessation of schooling at or before the college level is a major tragedy both for the individual and for society. An adult world grappling with adult problems ought to have better resources than warmed-over memories of adolescent thinking. The university needs seasoned students even more than it needs money. Why shouldn't industry, the foundations, and the government agencies send men back to the campus on furlough or sabbatical leave, with the understanding that part of their time be given to general education? And another notion — doubtless fantastic: a year's broad instruction — not necessarily in the college and certainly not in the orthodox graduate school — for all mature young men and women might be far better insurance for the common defense and general welfare than any amount of universal military training.

Be this as it may, we have with us today and tomorrow more experienced and more responsive college student bodies than ever before. There is thus added reason for the best possible undergraduate program, right now. This is step two. Let us get general education moving in Utah. It is moving elsewhere. The aims and spirit I have tried to describe are given substance, in however varied a form, at Columbia, Colgate, Harvard, Union, Chicago, Michigan State, Iowa, Minnesota, Reed, Stanford, Oregon — to name only a few. We in this area were once pioneers. When the Lower Division of the University of Utah was established in '32, it represented progressive practice and a move in the right direction, if not far. That direction, to repeat, is toward focused and integrated experience of the knowledge needful to free men. In the intervening sixteen years, the academic world has marched on and left us standing still — not, be it added, with the acquiescence of the Division itself. Let us make the next move: organize the basic courses on the pilot principle, live with them a little, improve them, and then prescribe them.

A third step, more important than the other two, and of concern to every college in the country. I have read somewhere an account of a prize horse. It was a beautiful horse; it had every equine virtue and no defect — except one: it was dead. We may have the most beautiful of programs in the most glittering of universities; its name may be general education; it may be terrific, not to say colossal, with four supersonic courses in front and three extra high-powered humanities behind, but it will be a dud and a turkey without good teaching. The instructor must understand and sympathize with the program; which in turn means that the institution must understand and sympathize with it, find men who can teach in it, and make adequate and honorable places for those who do.

All this is not easy, for two reasons. First, to teach general education well requires, beyond breadth of training or point of view, more than ordinary humility, judgment, and tact. It is simpler to teach segments of one's own narrow field than to relate elements of a broad area while working with and learning from representatives of other departments. It would be easier for me, for example, to teach a special-

ty to advanced students in English than a co-operative course relating literature to its sister arts, or sharing with other disciplines in an historical synthesis. It would be easier, but it would not be more useful, or more exciting.

Second, to make general education successful requires some revision of conventional values. It requires putting in practice the theory that understanding is as necessary as fact, breadth as depth, teaching as research, the good generalist as the good specialist. Theoretically these are equated; ideally, united; actually, often disjoined and ill balanced. We have all encountered the eminent scholar who should have a nice safe library, or laboratory, and be kept there. This is no plea for ignorance: a university is a center of knowledge and hence of research. It is also, and first, a dispenser of education; as such, its function is teaching. I am concerned with this function. Society cannot leave general education to the whim of the student; it has too much at stake. However, what is required should be good, and the student should be made to feel that it is. As always, the very best teaching imaginable will fall short; but the very best available should be provided, and rewarded.

This best calls for both facts and values, knowledge and wisdom. The success of science, the prestige of research, have been mixed blessings for education. One such blessing has been the ideal of objectivity. Some years ago, Counts of Columbia described the college professor as

> the individual who adopts an agnostic attitude towards every important social issue, who can balance the pros against the cons with the skill of a juggler, who sees all sides of every issue and never commits himself to any, who delays action until all the facts are in, who knows that all the facts will never come in, who consequently holds his judgment in a state of indefinite suspension, and who before the approach of middle age sees his powers of action atrophy and his social sympathies decay.[18]

This is, I hope, caricature. Indeed, I am reliably informed that in science it is considered correct not only to pursue truth but to catch it. In the social studies and the humanities, however, this has been a dubious business. Professors who stuck their necks out have been known to get their heads chopped off. Yet at bottom is the question one of academic freedom? In any field the teacher owes the student not merely information but judgment. To say what to the best of his knowledge is true, is not really a privilege; it is a duty.

VII

What, in sum, has been argued? This: that our world is in imminent peril; that among means of averting this peril and building a good life beyond is education; that among the several necessary kinds of education one, called general, and including science, the social studies, and the humanities, is indispensable; that history, philosophy, and literature discharge essential functions having practical consequences for our present and future existence; and that we here in this region and this university can and should bear our small part in this far-flung enterprise. This is a modest proposal, perhaps too modest. What, it may be asked, does a Utah college program matter when earth's foundations

[18] In "Education through Indoctrination," National Education Association, Department of Superintendence, *Official Reports*, 1932, pp. 193-199.

shake? What can all the colleges and all the arts and sciences matter in the land of the double feature and the singing commercial, Jim Crow, machine politics, and the almighty dollar?

There are three answers. They are brief, and the end. First, we are not alone; many others put their shoulders to the wheel, and the wheel may move farther and faster than we think. The elements of destiny are ultimately imponderable; who surely knows the sum of things that turn the balance in the hours of decision, the weight of a few votes or voices more or less, the pressure of the silent tides of feeling? Let us not overrate little people and little actions; let us not sell them short either.

Second, in the race with catastrophe, the odds are of course on catastrophe. It is easier to make war than peace, as we discover daily. It is easier to destroy than to construct; for the moment, the communist has this advantage. But even were we alone, were the odds greater and the prospects darker than they are, we should still have the moral obligation and reward of effort. To try and fail would be bad; it would be worse not to try. Try what? I say we should not disdain our own jobs, though small — what we know how to do, what we *can* do.

The third answer comes from a Greek writer who lived centuries ago, whose very name is uncertain, but whom we call for convenience Longinus. He wrote:

> Nature has set our human family apart from the humble herd of brutes, and has bidden us to the pageant of life and of the whole universe that we might both be spectators of the mighty drama and acquit ourselves as worthy actors there . . . . If we survey our life on every side, how greatness and beauty and eminence have everywhere the prerogative, we shall straightway perceive the end for which we were created. Hence it is that we are led by nature to admire, not our little rivers, for all their purity and homely-uses, so much as Nile and Rhine and Danube, and, beyond all, the sea.

It is true; it is *still* true. If we look about us at the kingdoms of the earth and, seeing corruption and blindness and greed and self-seeking, despair of our time and of our own nature as cheap and contemptible, it is well to be reminded that

> Our history is grave noble and tragic . . . .
> We have lived a long time in this land and with honor.

Those are the words of a poet, and in the double record of poetry and life we have the assurance of dignity and the measure of worth; through art and history we reconcile ourselves to being men. It is not mean to belong to the same race as Newton, and Socrates, and Leonardo; and Gandhi, and Lincoln, and Joan of Arc. It is not inglorious to share the experience of Antigone or Ahab, of King Saul or King Lear. This much of human possibility we know. As to the horizon beyond, Carlyle says better all I know to say:

> . . . Like some wild-flaming, wild-thundering train of Heaven's Artillery, does this mysterious MANKIND thunder and flame, in long-drawn, quick-succeeding grandeur, through the unknown Deep. Thus, like a God-created, fire-breathing Spirit-host, we emerge from the Inane; haste stormfully across the astonished Earth; then plunge again into the Inane. Earth's mountains are levelled, and her seas filled up, in our passage: can the Earth, which is but dead and a vision, resist Spirits which have reality and are alive? On the hardest adamant some footprint of us is stamped-in; the last Rear of the host will read traces of the earliest Van. But whence? — O Heaven, whither? . . . .

Note

Books and essays on education for the modern world are beyond counting; the present paper is indebted to more of these than I can name or even remember. In addition to the works cited in the text, I mention the following:

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